Statement of Mandate 2015–2016

Community Services

NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Department of Community Services

Statement of Mandate 2015-2016

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Message from the Minister and Deputy Minister

On behalf of the Department of Community Services, we are pleased to present the 2015-2016 Statement of Mandate.

Community Services strengthens the independence, self-reliance and security of people and communities across Nova Scotia. We will continue transforming our programs to make them even more effective and to ensure long term sustainability -- so that when help is needed, it will be available.

Strong and healthy children who can achieve their potential are the future of our communities and our province. Over the coming months we will be improving a number of programs that help support children.

Updating the *Children and Family Services Act* will strengthen the protection of children who are living in situations of abuse or neglect and remedy a service gap for youth aged 16 to 19. Over the coming months we will be engaging with the community to amend this legislation and better protect children at risk.

Foster parents provide a valued home environment for children. Based on conversations with foster parents we are making a number of improvements to the program.

The province's first Sexual Violence Strategy will be implemented over the next two years. We heard from many Nova Scotians about the need to better coordinate services across the province. We listened and we're taking action.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guides a number of ongoing initiatives. Enhancing opportunities for supported community-based living, and developing an employment framework for persons with disabilities continue to be priorities. Persons with disabilities belong in every community and workplace across the province. Accessibility legislation is expected to be drafted and introduced in 2016.

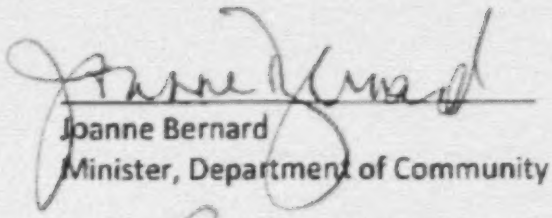
We will continue to modernize Employment Support and Income Assistance by focusing on better results for clients and alignment with other career counselling supports.

As we invest funds on behalf of Nova Scotians, it is critical to ensure that we are getting the most impact. To support this, we will talk to our community partners about how best to work together to get results for Nova Scotians.

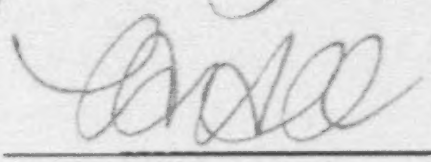
Changing the way we deliver services to Nova Scotians will better help people to change their lives. It is well-recognized that individual success is the key to collective success as a province.

We want to make sure we have the right environment so that one by one, we create opportunities right here.

Regards,



Joanne Bernard
Minister, Department of Community Services



Lynn Hartwell
Deputy Minister, Department of Community Service

1.0 Mandate

The primary responsibility of the Department of Community Services is to ensure the basic needs of individuals and families are met by providing financial support to persons in need and by protecting children and adults at risk. Most of the department's expenditures are in the form of direct payments to clients in need of financial assistance and to service providers who provide residential, vocational, preventive, and protection services to children and families, and persons with disabilities. Together, these programs and services form a secure and predictable social safety net for vulnerable Nova Scotians.

Mission

The Department of Community Services is committed to a sustainable social support system that promotes the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve. This will be achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership, and collaboration with our partners.

Strategic Goals

Community Services has set a strategic course guided by a number of strategic goals:

- enable more Nova Scotians to live independent of income assistance;
- improve opportunities of social inclusion for persons with disabilities;
- improve the educational, justice, health, social and economic outcomes of children in care and children of income assistance recipients; and
- improve the sustainability of the social service system enabling appropriate response to societal and demographic change.

Legislative Authority

Services are delivered under the authority and direction of the following legislation:

Adoption Information Act
Children and Family Services Act
Disabled Persons Commission Act
Employment Support and Income Assistance Act
Homes for Special Care Act
Intercountry Adoption Act
Protection of Persons in Care Act
Senior Citizen's Financial Aid Act
Social Assistance Act

2.0 Programs

Each year, the department provides direct services to approximately 150,000 Nova Scotians, approximately 16 percent of the provincial population. Services are broad in scope and include, but are not limited to:

- basic and special needs for over 44,000 people who benefit from the Income Assistance program;
- employment supports for some 8,000 income assistance recipients;
- additional financial support through the poverty reduction credit program to almost 15,000 income assistance recipients;
- child benefits for some 38,000 children of low-income families;
- property tax rebates for almost 15,000 senior households;
- 28,000 Child Abuse Register searches;
- 11,000 referrals made to Child Protection Services;
- support to nearly 630 foster families;
- placement and case management services for over 5,000 persons with disabilities;
- licensing services for about 330 homes and facilities providing residential care for persons with disabilities, and some 20 facilities providing residential and other support to children in care; and
- grant management and funding support to over 600 service providers and community based organizations.

More information on the Department's programs and services can be found on the Department's website, http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/.

3.0 Priorities

With approval from Government in November, Community Services launched a multi-year Transformation Program. All of the core programs under the department's mandate are included in the program. Our goals on this front are ambitious but clear: more sustainable programs with better outcomes for clients.

Below is a description of the department's 2015-2016 priorities which flow from the Transformation Program.

Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA)

Priority: Modernized Benefit System

In 2014-2015, the department continued to set the stage for the creation of a modernized benefit system. It has long been identified by government and stakeholders that the current system is large and complicated for clients to understand and for staff to administer. From the client perspective, it is not transparent and individuals are forced to sacrifice long-term interests for the sake of satisfying immediate needs. It does not enable independence or support social inclusion and creates stigma for those who utilize the services. Because the system is focused on financial transactions and not case management, it is difficult to measure the outcomes and impacts that we are having on the lives of Nova Scotians.

In 2015-2016, the department will engage in a detailed design of a modernized benefit system that is administratively simple; balances needs with resources; and offers streamlined and integrated services. The system will be underpinned by an outcomes focus, promoting a more active role for clients in decision-making, choice and accountability. The department will develop and implement plans to engage key internal and external stakeholders throughout this process.

The system will also be designed in a way that positions income assistance payments, benefits and services, within the context of broader government and community services, including other income tested programs, tax benefits and incentives.

Priority: Outcome, Evaluation & Monitoring Framework

One of the first steps in 2015-2016 will be the creation of an outcomes framework, supported by robust evaluation and monitoring, to measure results. Outcomes will be used to guide a detailed design of activities, interventions and services within the modernized benefit system.

By adopting an effective evaluation and monitoring framework, the program will be able to be responsive to changing client needs and the external environment, while continuously focusing on a design that enables the attainment of results.

Priority: Employment Support Alignment with Careers Nova Scotia

As part of its Benefit Reform Initiative, the department will be reviewing all of its employment support programming and services, aligning where appropriate within the department and across government, to enable clients to find and maintain employment.

In 2015-2016 Community Services will take the lead, working with Careers Nova Scotia (LAE), on the introduction of service standards and common tools, including assessment and case management, for those ESIA clients most closely aligned with labour market readiness - those

considered "job ready", including those who may require some additional supports such as a wage subsidy or on the job training supports to obtain and maintain employment. The focus will be on the development of appropriate employment maintenance supports to assist people who successfully obtain employment, to maintain same, and to subsequently reduce the number of people re-entering the ESIA system on a monthly basis.

This work aligns closely with the government's commitment to addressing the province's demographic issues. Meaningful labour market attachment for IA clients, under-represented groups and persons with disabilities is important to the economic and social well-being of our province. Working in alignment with LAE will help better connect IA clients with employers and employment supports to more successful long-term career outcomes.

Child, Youth and Family Services (CYFS)

Priority: Amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act*

The *Children and Family Services Act* is almost 25 years old and has not had substantive amendments since its introduction. The purpose of the *Act* is to protect children from harm, promote the integrity of the family, and assure the best interests of children. While it provides a solid foundation for child welfare, the legislation has not kept pace with ongoing research about child development or ongoing case law.

In 2015-2016, Government will introduce a series of amendments to the *Children and Family Services Act*. The focus of the amendments will be to increase the age of a child, change the definition of neglect, and to improve the lives of children in care.

Priority: Continuum of supports and services for children, youth and families

Community Services recognizes the diverse needs of families and communities in ensuring that children and young people in Nova Scotia are nurtured, healthy, and safe and realize their full potential.

In 2015-2016, work will commence on the development of a structured continuum of services from prevention through to early intervention, child protection, and out of home care. The goal of the continuum is to provide children, young people and families with seamless access to a broad spectrum of supports and services that responds best to their needs.

In addition, prevention and early intervention components will be strengthened to reduce the likelihood of families becoming involved in child protection, formal care and other more costly and intrusive systems. This will include leveraging community-based programs and services that support children, young people and families experiencing a range of vulnerabilities.

Priority: Improving Outcomes for Youth-at-Risk

Unfortunately, many of Nova Scotia's youth face social, emotional, economic, family and environmental conditions that make them vulnerable for poor outcomes. In 2015-16, the department will develop a comprehensive framework that will identify ways to support improved outcomes for Youth-at-Risk across all components of its service delivery. Using a social determinants of health lens, which identifies the holistic needs of youth required to meet their full potential, key areas of focus will be housing, health (emotional and physical), income, employment, safety, education, and social connectedness.

Priority: Modernized Foster Parent Program

It is vital for the Province to maintain a healthy foster parent program as foster families provide the day to day care for about 800 (73%) children in the Minister's care.

Since 2008, the number of approved foster homes in Nova Scotia dropped from 851 to 627, which represents a 25% decrease. With 22% of Nova Scotia's foster parents over 60 years of age, this trend is likely to continue.

In 2014-2015, following a province-wide foster parent survey, a joint working group of foster parents and Community Services staff developed the "Dialogue with Foster Parents" report which includes 13 recommendations to improve both recruitment of new foster families and retention of current foster families.

In 2015-2016, Community Services will focus on the implementation of the report's recommendations, including:

- the development of a comprehensive marketing strategy which will include a stronger on-line and social media presence, with recruitment messages aimed at addressing the prevailing misconceptions, beliefs and attitudes about fostering that prevent people from volunteering to foster;
- an accelerated approval process for respite foster parent applicants;
- consideration of options to modernize and streamline children in care payments to foster parents;
- the introduction of enhanced peer support programs;
- working with the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia to introduce a new complaint and issue resolution process for foster parents, with an emphasis on restorative practices; and
- ensuring that the urgent needs of foster families, that arise after business hours, are addressed.

Priority: **Implementation of Sexual Violence Strategy (year 2 of 3)**

The Department of Community Services is leading the development and implementation of the Sexual Violence Strategy that focuses on prevention and improving supports and services for victims/survivors and their families. Through the 2014-2015 consultation process, we learned that services across the province are not well coordinated, contributing to the lack of accessibility, visibility and inclusiveness for victims/survivors.

In 2015-2016, the department will, through the release of the Sexual Violence Strategy:

- support communities to build coordinated and sustainable service delivery models of support for victims/survivors reflective of communities' needs and assets;
- collaborate with partners at the Departments of Justice, Health & Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development, and community-based service providers;
- identify the key components of a comprehensive prevention approach;
- create and disseminate collaboratively designed public awareness & training resources; and
- support communities to develop detailed work plans which outline how communities will meet provincial outcomes for improved supports and services to victims/survivors of sexual violence.

Disability Support Program (DSP, formerly Services for Persons with Disabilities)

In 2015-2016, the Department of Community Services will continue to move plans into action as transformation of the Disability Support Program continues.

Priority: **Employment Framework for Persons with Disabilities**

In 2015-2016, the Department of Community Services will initiate work aimed at developing an employment framework for persons with disabilities. The goal is to supplement vocational and day supports already in place by defining specific and measurable outcomes, targeted at increasing labour market attachment amongst persons with disabilities.

This year will include:

- collaborating with key stakeholders, community partners and program participants to develop a framework that achieves the defined outcomes;

- assessing options for system investments to target better employment outcomes for persons with disabilities;
- the development of standards and services agreements to ensure that community partners understand their role in achieving these outcomes; and
- the identification of opportunities to develop an integrated approach to employment for persons with disabilities that spans government departments and community partners.

Priority: Accessibility Legislation

Accessibility legislation is about new law, regulations, standards and policies that will systematically identify, remove and prevent barriers that prevent individuals from full participation in all aspects of Nova Scotian life.

To get a barrier free Nova Scotia, a legislative framework is needed that encourages participation, ensures access for all and removes barriers that prevent people from participating fully in the community.

In 2015-2016, the Department will draft the accessibility legislation using the Minister's Advisory Panel Report (submitted in February 2015) as a resource. The legislation is scheduled to be introduced in the fall of 2016.

Priority: Community Residential Support Plan Implementation

A key objective of DSP transformation is to implement a transition plan to allow DSP clients to move residential placements into the community over time. It is important to clearly understand the needs of the current DSP clients and the range of options required to support these individuals. The Community Residential Support Plan implementation is anticipated to be flexible, adaptable, and consider all components with their interdependencies and impacts (including financial).

Corporate Services

Priority: Departmental Outcomes Framework

Community Services has embarked on a large transformation agenda. To ensure this produces the results the Government expects and the department is striving to achieve – more sustainable programs with better outcomes for clients – early in 2015-2016, work will begin on the development of an outcomes (performance management) framework. The framework will encompass the whole department, together with each of the core business areas and the

corporate support functions. Once developed, an implementation roadmap will be created to address how the department will move forward with this substantial change.

Priority: Public Awareness Strategy

On an annual basis the programs and services of Community Services reach some 150,000 Nova Scotians. Much of this work is either not visible to the public or is not well understood by the public.

In 2015-2016 the department will embark on the development of a Public Awareness Strategy. Specifically, the objectives of this work will be to:

- through research and some stakeholder engagement, identify and confirm current public perception of departmental programs, services and clients;
- develop a Public Engagement Plan, informed by the findings, to be used to improve the department's public presence, and to inform the public about DCS programs, services and clients while dispelling myths; and
- develop a Public Awareness Strategy that will influence accurate public perception in the future aligned with the department's overall transformation objectives.

Priority: Modernized Agreement Management Standards, Policies and Procedures

Agreement Management is a formal process for establishing, monitoring and administering funding agreements with external service providers and organizations who deliver programs on behalf of the Department of Community Services (DCS).

The goal of Agreement Management is to safeguard the use of public funds by:

- defining, documenting and evaluating program outcomes to be achieved by external service provider organizations that are funded by DCS;
- ensuring DCS funded external service providers and organizations comply with sound governance, financial, and risk management practices throughout the funding lifecycle; and
- clarifying roles and responsibilities for both DCS and service providers.

The purpose of the Agreement Management Project is to develop and implement processes, policies and tools to ensure due diligence and effective oversight of funding for:

- Community Investment Grants,
- Program Grants, and
- Direct Client Services

Specifically, in 2015-2016, the department will undertake the following work:

- establish and implement a modernized Agreement Management Program Definition with third party service providers;
- develop and execute implementation plans to move the organization to the future state Agreement Management program;
- define, develop and implement LMAPD agreements with Adult Service Centers, implementing LaMPSS as the management tool for those agreements; and
- work with the department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) to enhance the LaMPSS technology to enable client tracking and improved reporting on client outcomes.

4.0 Budget Context

Community Services			
	2014-2015 Estimate	**2014-2015 Forecast**	**2015-2016 Estimate**
Program & Service Area	($thousands)	($thousands)	($thousands)
Gross Departmental Expenses:			
Senior Management	$1,763	$1,858	$1,707
Corporate Services Unit	9,018	8,324	5,038
Policy and Information Management	7,307	6,546	6,509
Field Offices	14,970	14,013	14,782
Disability Support Program	298,843	311,016	311,735
Child, Youth and Family Support	142,536	147,293	134,031
Housing Services	36,498	34,156	42,228
Employment Support and Income Assistance	382,668	387,132	381,577
Housing Authority and Property Operations	9,130	8,912	8,726
NS Advisory Council on the Status of Women	763	842	9,077
Total Departmental Expenses	$903,496	$920,092	$915,410
TCA Purchase Requirements	0	0	0
Provincial Funded Staff (FTEs)	1,730.5	1730.5	1,646.5

5.0 Performance Measures

5.1 Employment Support & Income Assistance Performance Measures

Outcome	Indicator	Base	Target	Strategic Actions
Increase the number of Nova Scotians living independent of Income Assistance	Number and % of NS living in poverty (LICO) - identifies NS who are at or below the poverty line.	2005-06: 76,000, 8.4% 2006-07: 74,000, 8.2% 2007-08: 75,000. 8.2% 2008-09: 74,000, 8.3% 2009-10: 71,000, 7.7% 2010-11: 64,000, 7.0%	Reduce the number and % of NS living in poverty.	Creation of an outcomes framework, supported by a robust evaluation and monitoring framework to measure results. Outcomes will be used to guide a detailed design of activities, interventions and services within the modernized benefit system. A detailed design of a modernized benefit system that is administratively simple; balances needs with resources; and offers streamlined and integrated services. The system will be underpinned by an outcomes focus, promoting a more active role for clients in decision-making, client choice and accountability. Lead, working with Careers Nova Scotia, the introduction of service standards and common tools, including assessment and case management, for those ESIA clients most closely aligned with labour market readiness - those considered
	Average monthly beneficiaries as a % of the NS population - represents the % of low income households dependent, in whole or in part, on Income Assistance to meet their basic needs in relation to the NS population.	2008-09: 4.6% 2009-10: 4.6% 2010-11: 4.7% 2011-12: 4.7% 2012-13: 4.7% 2013-14: 4.7%	Reduce the caseload by 200 in 2015-16.	
	% of Income Assistance (IA) recipients with wage income; an indication of recipients with labour market attachment and their ability to achieve a greater degree	2008-09: 8.9% 2009-10: 9.0% 2010-11: 9.2% 2011-12: 9.1%	11.6% of IA recipients with wage income in 2015-16.	

	of self-reliance and independence.	2012-13: 9.9% 2013-14: 11.4%		"job ready", including those who may require some additional supports such as a wage subsidy or on the job training supports to obtain and maintain employment. Continued refinement of supports that enable clients to gain employment and stay employed. The initial focus is on recipients who have strong potential for employment success, with a goal of helping them to connect to the labour market.

5.2 Child, Youth and Family Supports Performance Measures

Outcome	Indicator	Base	Target	Strategic Actions
To improve the educational, justice, health, social and economic determinants of children in care and children of income assistance recipients	Percentage of children in permanent care placed for adoption.	2008-09: 8.7% 2009-10: 10.8% 2010-11: 11.9% 2011-12: 12.5% 2012-13: 13.6% 2013-14: 14.5%	13.6% of children in permanent care are adopted in 2015-16	Continue to implement a series of improvements including specialized training for staff, new permanency planning standards, and a new tool to track both children in care and waiting families. As part of the Benefit Reform work, DCS will be reviewing the bundle of financial supports - income assistance payments, child benefits, other income tested programs, tax benefits and incentives – available to low-income families with children.
	Number and % of children living in poverty (LICO) - identifies children who are at or below the poverty line.	2005-06: 16,000, 8.7% 2006-07: 15,000, 8.4% 2007-08: 14,000. 7.9% 2008-09: 14,000, 8.2% 2009-10: 15,000, 8.9% 2010-11: 13,000, 8.0%	Reduce the number and % of children living in poverty.	

5.3 Disability Support Programs Performance Measures

Outcome	Indicator	Base	Target	Strategic Actions
Improve opportunities for social inclusion for persons with disabilities	Number of DSP clients on the waitlist for residential supports	2010-11: People with Supports: 499 People without Supports: 259 **Total Waitlist: 758** 2011-12: People with Supports: 570 People without Supports: 279 **Total Waitlist: 849** 2012-13: People with Supports: 659 People without Supports: 292 **Total Waitlist: 951** 2013-14: People with Supports: 719 People without Supports: 336 **Total Waitlist: 1055**	Reduce the number of clients on the waitlists in 2015-16.	Continue with the DSP Transformation
	Percentage of DSP clients supported in community based options.	2012-13 (Base Year): 67% 2013-14: 67%	Increase the percentage of DSP clients supported in community based options	